

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2019

Nancy Potok, Ph.D.
Chief Statistician of the United States
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Dr. Potok,

We write to oppose the use of the chained Consumer Price Index (chained CPI) to calculate annual adjustments to the Federal Poverty Level. The use of chained CPI would lower the poverty line, which already understates the income families need to afford the basics, and so it would make poverty measurement less accurate. It would also cause millions of individuals and families to lose eligibility for, or receive less assistance from federal health, nutrition, energy, labor, and legal services programs. The purpose of these vital programs is to provide support to our country's most vulnerable including, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and children. Under the use of chained CPI – the federal government's definition of poor would change, yet the individuals and families that fail to meet the definition would nevertheless remain poor.

Indexing the Federal Poverty Level to chained CPI would mean more than 250,000 seniors and individuals with disabilities would lose eligibility entirely or receive less assistance from Medicare's Part D Low-Income Subsidy Program. While seniors and individuals with disabilities are currently forced to skip doses or cut pills in half because of the out-of-pocket costs, chained CPI would only exacerbate these issues as it would lead to higher Part D premiums and even higher cost-sharing. Chained CPI would also lead to more than 150,000 individuals and seniors with disabilities losing the assistance they receive in paying their Medicare Part B premiums. As a result, dual-eligibles would face premiums of over \$1,500 to continue their Medicare Part B coverage.

In 2018 the total enrollment of children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) decreased by more than 800,000. Chained CPI would eliminate comprehensive health coverage under Medicaid and CHIP for more than 300,000 children, including some pregnant women. Given the maternal mortality crisis in the United States, as well as, high infant mortality rates compared to the nineteen other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development nations, indexing the federal poverty level to chained CPI would only lead to more harm of our country's most vulnerable.

Program (SNAP). SNAP, formerly known as the food stamp program, is our nation's most effective anti-hunger program. Currently, roughly 40 million people in more than 20 million households rely on the program to be able to afford a sufficient diet. SNAP recipients are our nation's most vulnerable—nearly 20 million are children, almost 5 million are low-income seniors, and 1.5 million are military veterans. Such changes to calculating the Federal Poverty Level would endanger basic food assistance for millions of Americans, and undoubtedly would increase hunger in the United States.

The Office of Management and Budget calculation adjustments to the Federal Poverty Level could be a matter of life and death for the millions of individuals that rely on critical health and nutrition programs. We are particularly disturbed that OMB would consider unilaterally changing the poverty line methodology so as to reduce or take away health coverage, nutrition benefits, and other essential assistance from low-income people that Congress intended to assist when it enacted the rules for these programs. We are alarmed that OMB would consider such a change without undertaking and presenting any research or analysis on these impacts or on whether the inflation rate faced by low-income households is higher or lower than the economy as a whole. We urge you not to move forward with the proposal. For all these reasons, we oppose the use of the chained CPI to calculate annual adjustments to the Federal Poverty Level to ensure that our country's most vulnerable do not lose access to these critical federal programs.

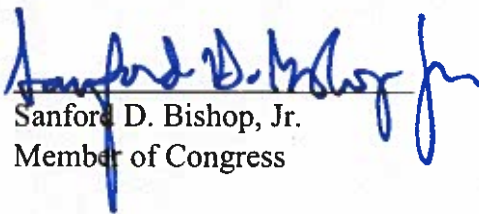
Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



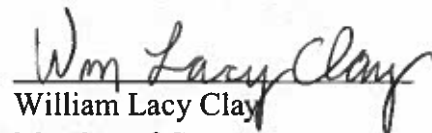
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



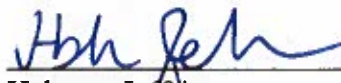
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



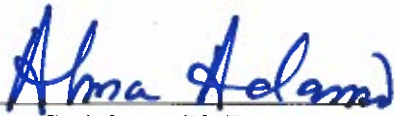
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress



William Lacy Clay
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Hakeem Jeffries
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Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
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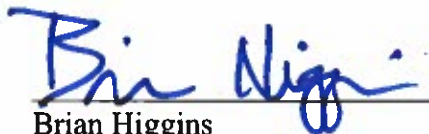
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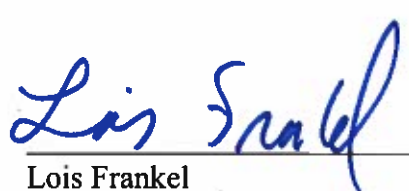
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Nydia Velázquez
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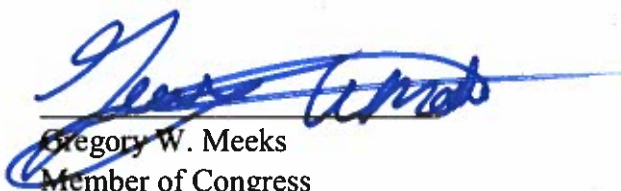
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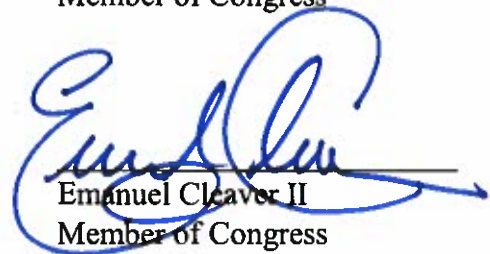
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Joe Courtney
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Emanuel Cleaver II
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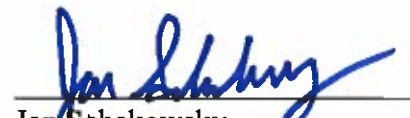
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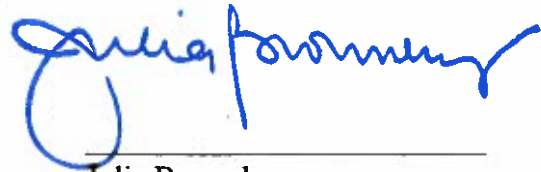
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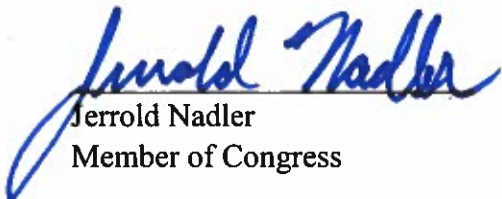
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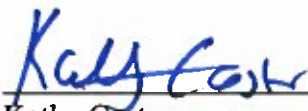
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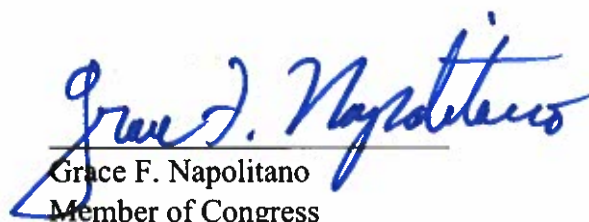
Karen Bass
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Lucille Roybal-Allard
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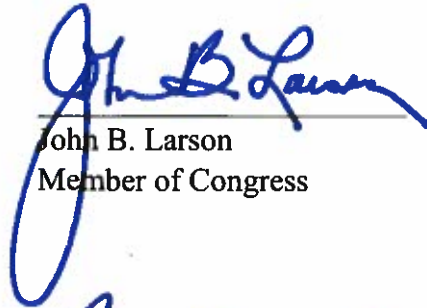
Sylvia Garcia
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Rashida Tlaib
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Adriano Espaillat
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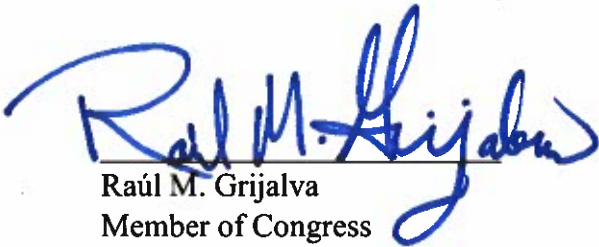
John B. Larson
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Veronica Escobar
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Pramila Jayapal
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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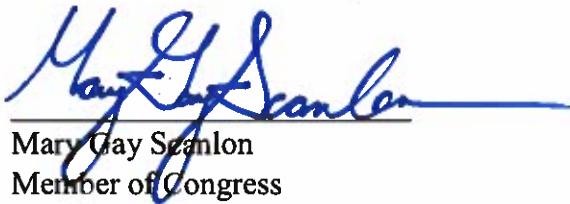
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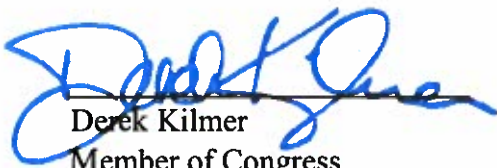
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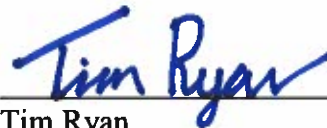
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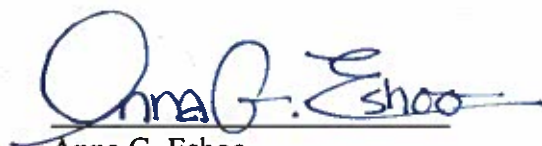
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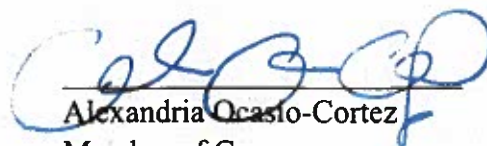
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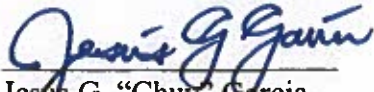

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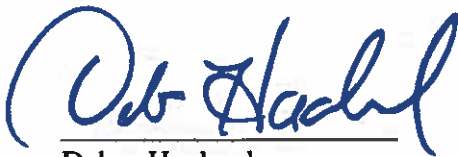
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Joseph D. Morelle
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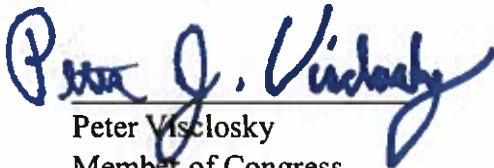
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